



Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Education Reimbursement Initiative

Data Analysis Report 2020

Prepared by INCCRRA, January 2021



This project was made possible by grant number 90TP0057. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

A diverse and qualified early childhood workforce continues to be a focus in Illinois. Through the Governor's Office for Early Childhood Development (GOECD), with funding from the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5), and in partnership with the Illinois Network of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), a program was implemented to address potential financial barriers to advancing or completing educational goals at accredited Illinois institutions of higher education.

The time-limited Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Education Reimbursement Initiative was identified as a way to support the early childhood workforce in Illinois. Program applications were made available in May 2020 and accepted until all funds were obligated. As a result, reimbursements totaling \$56,250 were distributed to over 160 early educators to alleviate financial barriers at accredited Illinois institutions of higher education.

Program Description

The Illinois early educator community has responded to similar programs with an overwhelming ask for support to reduce barriers to pursuing degree, certification, and credential completion. This program supplied a modest \$375 reimbursement directly to early educators as they attempted to address barriers such as tuition, fees, and outstanding student debt. This opportunity was made available statewide, with priority given to early educators in the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Group 2 counties.

At the conclusion of this program, an analysis of the data gathered was completed. In addition, early educators responded to survey questions, as part of the application, to share their perception of how the funds would assist them in continuing or completing formal education.

Data Collection

Data analyzed in this report was gathered through multiple sources. Applicants described their needs and provided supporting documentation to confirm. Applicants were asked to supply a program application and confirm or obtain a Gateways Registry Membership. In addition, documentation including paystubs, Internal Revenue Service W-9 form, and receipts of payment made to an accredited Illinois institution of higher education or proof of a current outstanding student debt owed was required.

Data Summary and Analysis

Demographic Information – All Applicants

Job Type Breakdown

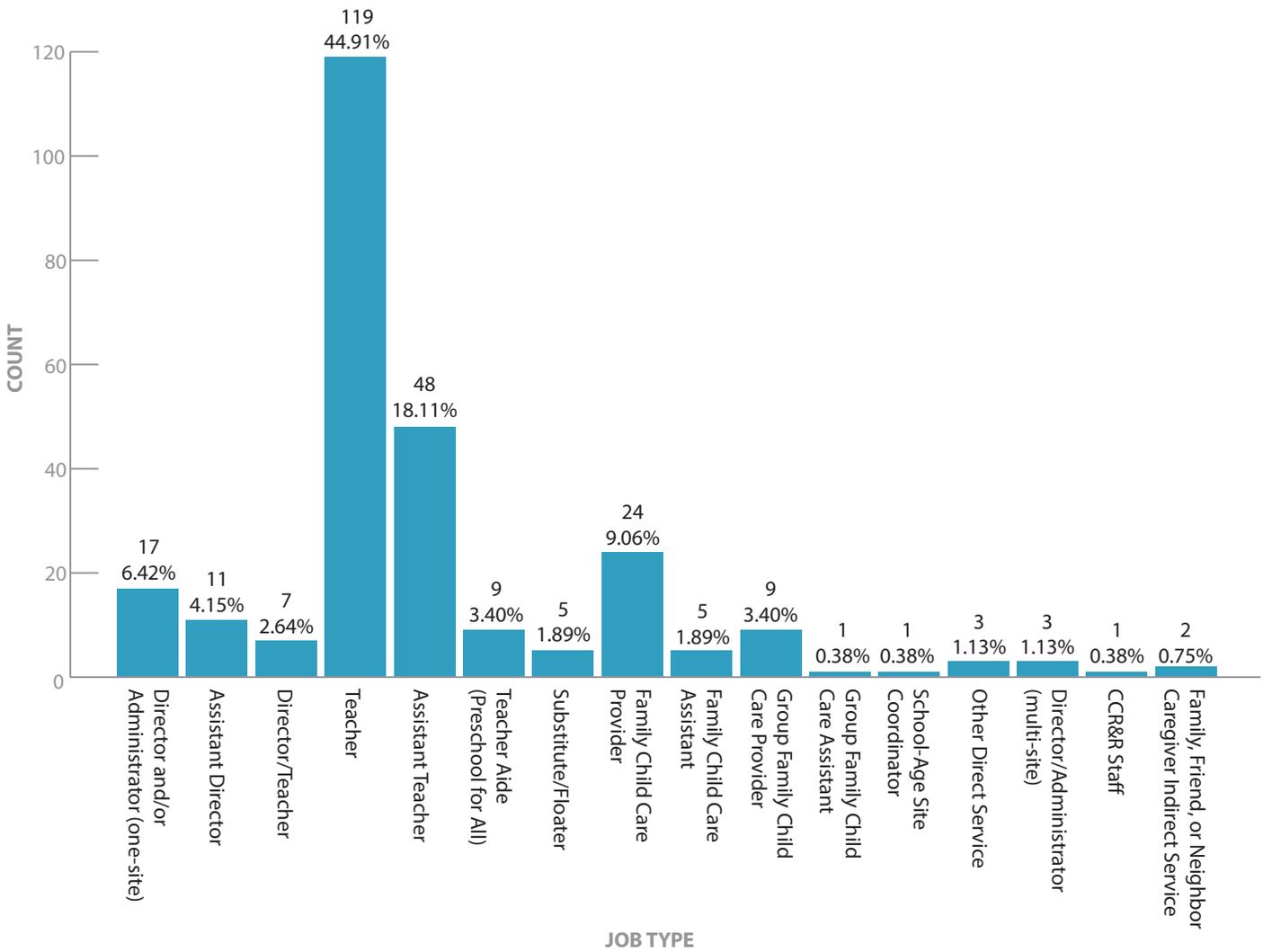
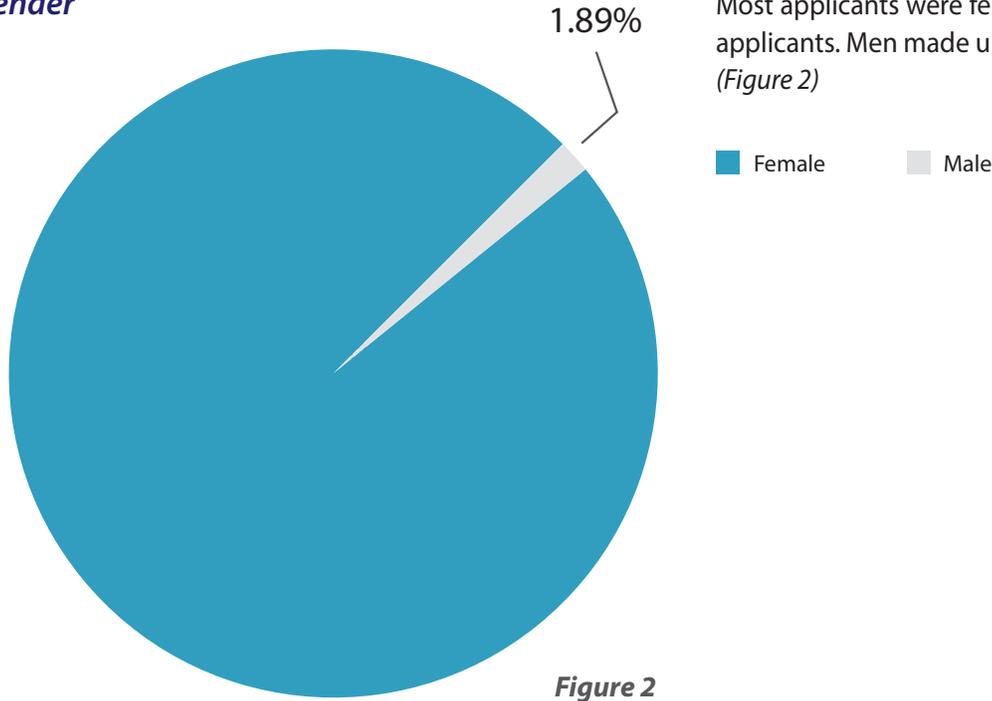


Figure 1

Applicants were most likely to be Teachers, representing 44.91 percent of applicants, followed by Assistant Teachers at 18.11 percent. Family Child Care Providers and Directors and/or Administrators were also more likely to be represented. (Figure 1)

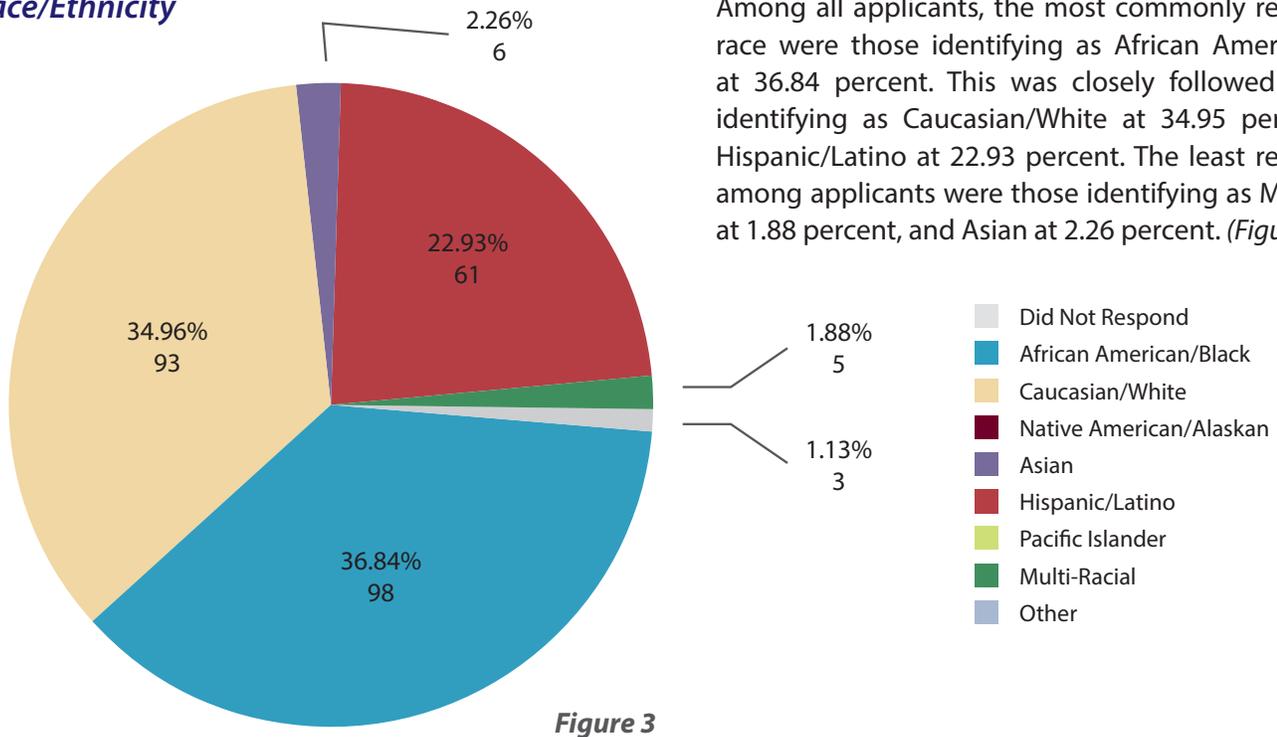
Gender



Most applicants were female, representing 98.11 percent of applicants. Men made up only 1.89 percent of all applicants. (Figure 2)

Figure 2

Race/Ethnicity



Among all applicants, the most commonly represented race were those identifying as African American/Black at 36.84 percent. This was closely followed by those identifying as Caucasian/White at 34.95 percent, and Hispanic/Latino at 22.93 percent. The least represented among applicants were those identifying as Multi-Racial at 1.88 percent, and Asian at 2.26 percent. (Figure 3)

Figure 3

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Region

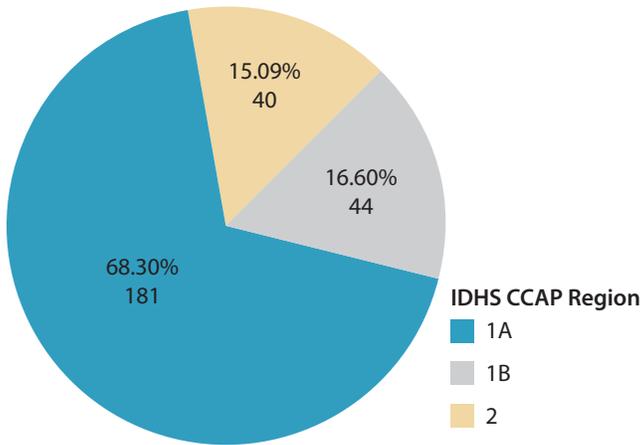


Figure 4

For the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Regions (Figure 5), 68.30 percent of all applicants were from Region 1A (Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, and McHenry counties), 16.60 percent were from Region 1B (Boone, Champaign, Kankakee, Madison, McLean, Monroe, Ogle, Peoria, Rock Island, Sangamon, St. Clair, Tazewell, Whiteside, Will, Winnebago, and Woodford counties), and 15.09 percent were from Region 2, which represents the remaining 79 counties in Illinois that are not in Regions 1A or 1B. (Figure 4)

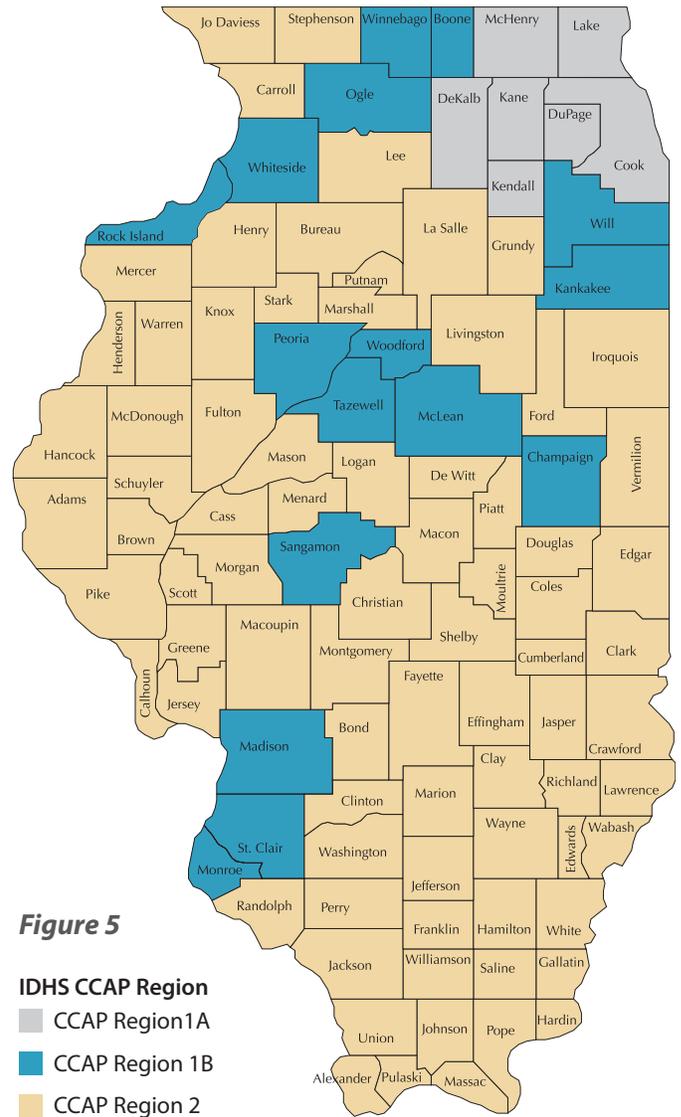
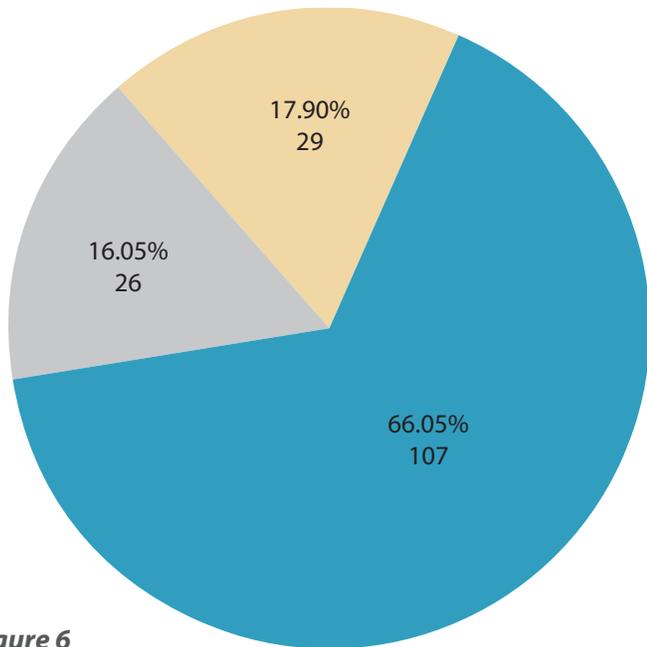


Figure 5

Eligible Applicants by Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Region



Among Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Regions, 107 eligible applicants came from Region 1A (66.05 percent). This was followed by Region 2 with 29 applicants (17.90 percent) and Region 1B with 26 applicants (16.05 percent). (Figure 6)

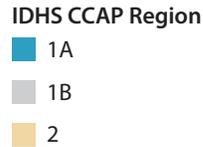
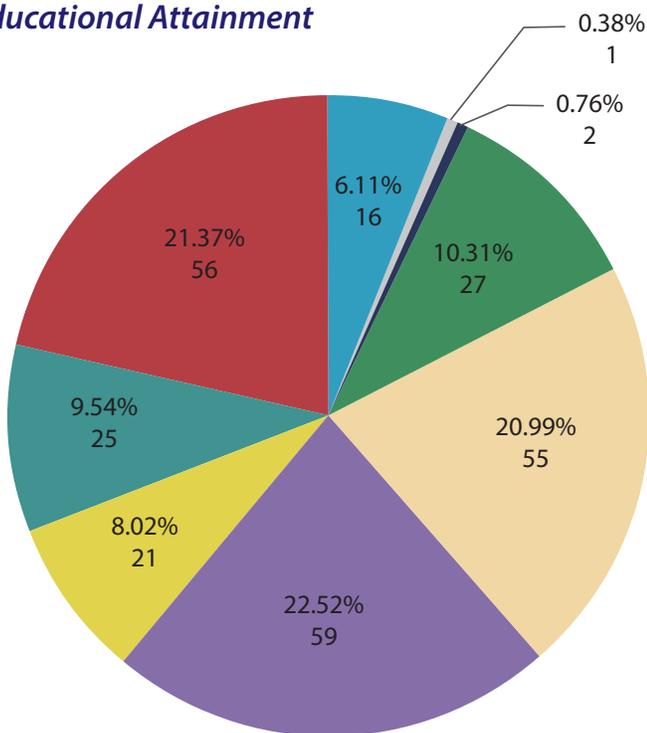


Figure 6

Educational Attainment



Among all applicants who submitted official transcripts or self-reported degree attainment, the highest degree earned was most often a Bachelor's Degree at 22.52 percent. This was followed closely by those with an Associate's Degree at 20.99 percent, High School/GED at 10.31 percent, and Some Associate's Level Coursework at 9.54 percent. The least often represented degree categories were Some Post-Graduate Level Coursework (0.38 percent), None/No Degree (0.76 percent), and Some Master's Level Coursework (6.11 percent). (Figure 7)

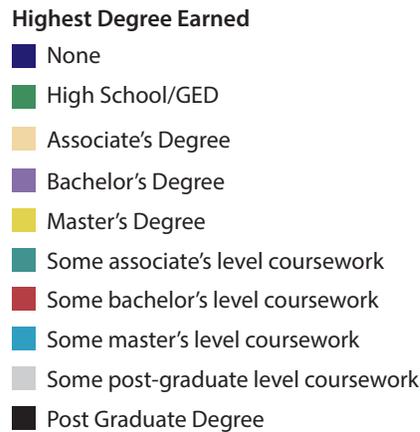


Figure 7

Mean Rate of Pay

The application asked for confirmation of employment, including individual rate of pay in dollars per hour for all applicants. Of applicants who supplied income information, the mean income was \$14.88 and the median income was \$14.99. (Table 1) When income information was analyzed by job type, there were some differences. Director/Administrator positions generally had the highest mean rate of pay at \$17.78 (one-site) and \$21.88 (multi-site). Group Family Child Care Assistant and Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregiver Indirect Services had the lowest mean rates of pay at \$10.00. There were exceptions to this, where the lone School-Age Site Coordinator made \$24.04 per hour. The mean rate of pay for Other Direct Service was \$23.94, where the maximum pay rate was the highest for any applicant at \$40.00 per hour. (Table 2)

Statistics		
Hourly Rate of Pay		
N	Valid	256
	Missing	10
Mean		\$14.8847
Median		\$14.9900

Table 1

Job Type	Total N	Hourly Rate of Pay		
		Minimum	Mean	Maximum
Total	238	\$8.75	\$15.75	\$40.00
Teacher	117	\$9.50	\$16.15	\$34.62
Assistant Teacher	48	\$8.75	\$14.14	\$27.19
Director and/or Administrator (one-site)	17	\$11.00	\$17.78	\$25.00
Assistant Director	10	\$12.00	\$18.84	\$25.00
Teacher Aide (Preschool for All)	9	\$10.00	\$14.06	\$20.75
Director/Teacher	7	\$11.50	\$17.23	\$25.00
Family Child Care Provider	7	\$9.02	\$12.94	\$21.63
Substitute/Floater	5	\$9.75	\$12.89	\$17.18
Family Child Care Assistant	5	\$9.00	\$11.80	\$16.00
Other Direct Service	3	\$14.98	\$23.94	\$40.00
Director/Administrator (multi-site)	3	\$20.00	\$21.88	\$22.98
Group Family Child Care Provider	2	\$10.00	\$12.00	\$13.99
Group Family Child Care Assistant	1	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
School-Age Site Coordinator	1	\$24.04	\$24.04	\$24.04
Family, Friend, Neighbor Caregiver Indirect Services	2	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
CCR&R Staff	1	\$13.00	\$13.00	\$13.00

Table 2

Perception of Education Reimbursement Benefits – All Applicants

Survey Responses

All applicants responded to several survey questions indicating what they would be able to do if awarded an education reimbursement. Most reported that they would be able to (re)enroll in Early Childhood Education/Child Development coursework at a rate of 78.9 percent. This was closely followed by advancing Gateways Credentials at 78.2 percent and receiving official transcript(s) at 72.4 percent. Completing a degree at an Illinois college or university was next at 70.5 percent. The least affirmative responses came from those saying they would be able to (re)enroll in a community college at 40.6 percent or (re)enrolling at a university at 56.7 percent. (Table 3)

		Count	Column N%
If you receive this reimbursement, will you be able to (re)enroll in ECE/CD coursework?	Yes	206	78.9%
	No	55	21.1%
At a community college?	Yes	106	40.6%
	No	155	59.4%
At a university?	Yes	148	56.7%
	No	113	43.3%
Be able to complete a degree at an Illinois college or university?	Yes	184	70.5%
	No	77	29.5%
Be able to advance your Gateways Credential?	Yes	204	78.2%
	No	57	21.8%
Be able to move up on the Great START Scale?	Yes	158	60.5%
	No	103	39.5%
Be able to receive your official transcript?	Yes	189	72.4%
	No	72	27.6%

Table 3

All applicants were asked to indicate what type of degree they would complete with education reimbursement support. 46.82 percent of applicants indicated that support would help with completion of a Bachelor's Degree. This was followed by an Associate's Degree at 34.68 percent, and a Graduate Degree at 18.50 percent. (Figure 8)

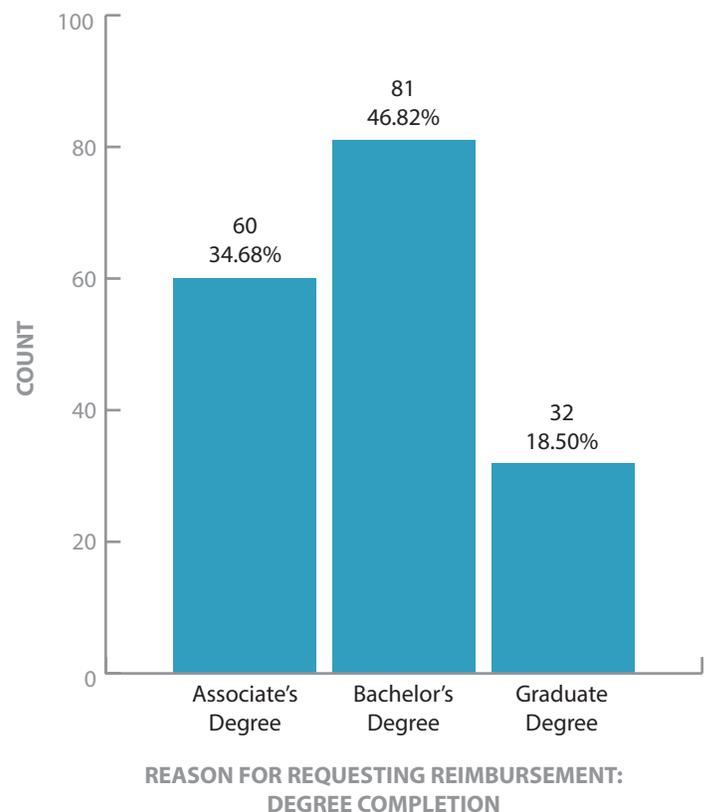


Figure 8

Debt Analysis – All Applicants

Total Debt Represented Among All Applicants

Of the 266 total applicants (Table 4), the mean debt was \$1,776.43 and the median debt was \$801.96. The cumulative debt was \$415,683.62.

Debt Owed to Different Institutions Among All Applicants

Table 5 below lists the institutions or entities where applicant debt occurred. Along with their names, the count of applicants owing money, including the mean, median, and sum of debt among applicants is listed. There were 31 institutions that were represented by only one applicant.

Statistics

Total Amount Owed/Paid
(per receipt/invoice)

N	Valid	234
	Missing	32
Mean		\$1,776.4257
Median		\$801.9550
Sum		\$415,683.62

Table 4

National Louis University, City Colleges of Chicago, and Rasmussen College are the institutions where the highest number of applicants incurred debt. The institutions that represented the highest amount of debt owed were to National Louis University (\$129,181.03), and the Chicago School of Professional Psychology (\$34,468.75). The lowest debts came from Care Courses (\$123.00) and Child Care Education Institute (\$99.00).

Institution/Entity	Count	Total Amount Owed/Paid (Per receipt/invoice)		
		Mean	Median	Sum
Total	266	\$1,776.43	\$801.95	\$415,683.62
National Louis University	56	\$2,306.80	\$1,667.53	\$129,181.03
No Institution Listed	37	\$173.96	\$0.00	\$1,391.65
City Colleges of Chicago	11	\$781.15	\$754.96	\$7,811.51
Rasmussen College	11	\$1,048.22	\$630.00	\$9,433.96
St. Augustine College	9	\$1,879.55	\$1,301.00	\$16,915.91
Joliet Junior College	8	\$492.83	\$331.45	\$3,942.62
College of Lake County	7	\$709.29	\$465.00	\$4,965.00
McHenry County College	6	\$398.87	\$439.25	\$2,393.23
Oakton Community College	6	\$1,074.81	\$725.63	\$6,448.87
Erikson Institute	5	\$1,275.00	\$327.00	\$6,375.00
Chicago State University	4	\$1,338.28	\$619.17	\$5,353.13
College of DuPage	4	\$1,748.87	\$1,060.00	\$6,995.47
Eastern Illinois University	4	\$1,448.42	\$973.12	\$5,793.69
Heartland Community College	4	\$906.38	\$516.00	\$3,625.50
Western Illinois University	4	\$2,731.50	\$2,529.05	\$10,925.98
Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)	3	\$134.53	\$140.00	\$403.60
Moraine Valley Community College	3	\$1,389.00	\$934.00	\$4,167.00
Quincy University	3	\$1,585.00	\$255.00	\$4,755.00
Southeastern Illinois College	3	\$86.00	\$129.00	\$258.00
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	3	\$2,218.61	\$2,688.00	\$6,655.82
Southwestern Illinois College	3	\$699.11	\$924.34	\$2,097.34
Waubensee Community College	3	\$609.67	\$447.00	\$1,829.00
Ashford University	2	\$3,643.00	\$3,643.00	\$7,286.00
Ashworth College	2	\$512.00	\$512.00	\$1,024.00
Aurora University	2	\$5,309.50	\$5,309.50	\$10,619.00

Institution/Entity	Total Amount Owed/Paid (Per receipt/invoice)			
	Count	Mean	Median	Sum
Council for Professional Recognition (CDA)	2	\$275.00	\$275.00	\$550.00
DePaul University	2	\$650.51	\$650.51	\$1,301.01
Governors State University	2	\$1,115.65	\$1,115.65	\$2,231.30
Illinois Central College	2	\$530.68	\$530.68	\$1,061.35
Kankakee Community College	2	\$1,192.05	\$1,192.05	\$2,384.09
Kendall College	2	\$970.44	\$970.44	\$1,940.87
Lincoln Land Community College	2	\$498.50	\$498.50	\$997.00
Morton College	2	\$645.68	\$645.68	\$1,291.36
Navient	2	\$11,123.32	\$11,123.32	\$22,246.63
Northeastern Illinois University	2	\$1,812.49	\$1,812.49	\$3,624.98
Prairie State College	2	\$364.83	\$364.83	\$729.65
Richland Community College	2	\$1,015.00	\$1,015.00	\$2,030.00
Roosevelt University	2	\$8,526.56	\$8,526.56	\$17,053.11
Spoon River College	2	\$1,205.50	\$1,205.50	\$2,411.00
Triton College	2	\$427.50	\$427.50	\$855.00
University of Illinois Chicago	2	\$586.00	\$586.00	\$1,172.00
Black Hawk College	1	\$620.00	\$620.00	\$620.00
Care Courses	1	\$123.00	\$123.00	\$123.00
Care Courses/Council for Professional Recognition (CDA)	1	\$323.99	\$323.99	\$323.99
Chicago School of Professional Psychology	1	\$34,468.75	\$34,468.75	\$34,468.75
Child Care Education Institute	1	\$99.00	\$99.00	\$99.00
Concordia University Portland	1	\$234.67	\$234.67	\$234.67
Elgin Community College	1	\$2,116.00	\$2,116.00	\$2,116.00
Highland Community College	1	\$1,137.00	\$1,137.00	\$1,137.00
Illinois State University	1	\$2,307.86	\$2,307.86	\$2,307.86
Illinois Valley Community College	1	\$831.22	\$831.22	\$831.22
Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)/Regional Office of Education (ROE)/Great Lakes Loan	1	\$29,258.92	\$29,258.92	\$29,258.92
John Wood Community College	1	\$579.00	\$579.00	\$579.00
Kaskaskia College	1	\$930.00	\$930.00	\$930.00
Learner's Edge	1	\$1,685.00	\$1,685.00	\$1,685.00
Lewis & Clark Community College	1	\$436.00	\$436.00	\$436.00
Lewis University	1	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
Lincoln College	1	\$1,390.00	\$1,390.00	\$1,390.00
North Park University	1	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
Northern Illinois University	1	\$2,670.27	\$2,670.27	\$2,670.27
Olivet Nazarene University	1	\$1,520.00	\$1,520.00	\$1,520.00
Parchment/Follett's College of DuPage Bookstore	1	\$225.89	\$225.89	\$225.89
Parkland College	1	\$525.00	\$525.00	\$525.00

Institution/Entity	Total Amount Owed/Paid (Per receipt/invoice)			
	Count	Mean	Median	Sum
Purdue University	1	\$1,588.32	\$1,588.32	\$1,588.32
Southern New Hampshire University	1	\$1,920.00	\$1,920.00	\$1,920.00
State Food Safety Training	1	\$188.00	\$188.00	\$188.00
Straighterline	1	\$158.00	\$158.00	\$158.00
University Accounting Service	1	\$2,387.01	\$2,387.01	\$2,387.01
University of Illinois	1	\$1,065.00	\$1,065.00	\$1,065.00
University of Illinois Springfield	1	\$546.06	\$546.06	\$546.06

Table 5

Dollars Owed for Various Reasons

Applicants were asked to report how an education reimbursement would address their debt. The following table compiles responses and respective means, medians, and sums. Personal debt incurred from paying for coursework was listed by the highest number of applicants (94 applicants) with the highest sum of \$60,013.16, a mean of \$638.44, and a median of \$375.00, the maximum education reimbursement allowed. This was followed by paying current outstanding debt (75 applicants) with a sum of \$43,585.70, a mean of \$581.14, and a median of \$375.00.

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Professional Educator Licensure Completion (10 applicants) with a sum of \$2,032.00, a mean of \$203.19, and a median of \$148.42, was the least requested. Gateways Credential Completion (17 applicants) with a debt sum of \$3,229.00, a mean of \$189.94 and a median debt of \$130.00 was also least requested. (Table 6)

		Statistics						
		Funding requested for Degree Completion	Funding requested for Gateways Credential Completion	Funding requested for ISBE Professional Educator Licensure Completion	Funding requested to obtain official transcripts	Funding requested to current outstanding debt	Funding requested to assist with personal debt incurred from paying for coursework	Funding requested for other specified reasons
N	Valid	51	17	10	22	75	94	23
	Missing	215	249	256	244	191	172	243
Mean		\$412.1659	\$189.94	\$203.19	\$98.28	\$581.1427	\$638.4379	\$1,572.8843
Median		\$375.0000	\$130.00	\$148.42	\$20.00	\$375.0000	\$375.0000	\$375.0000
Sum		\$21,020.46	\$3,229	\$2,032	\$2,162	\$43,585.70	\$60,013.16	\$36,176.34

Table 6

Amount Requested by All Applicants

As seen in Table 7, the mean amount requested among all applicants was \$376.75, while the median amount requested was \$375.00, the maximum education reimbursement allowed. The total amount requested among all applicants was \$90,419.19.

Statistics		
Total amount being requested		
N	Valid	240
	Missing	26
Mean		\$376.7466
Median		\$375.0000
Sum		\$90,419.19

Table 7

Debt Analysis and Reimbursement Payment Information – Eligible Applicants

Total Debt Represented Among Eligible Applicants

A total of 162 applicants were awarded an education reimbursement through the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5). In this subgroup of applicants, the mean debt owed was \$1,825.16, and the median debt was \$939.50. The cumulative debt was \$295,675.25. (Table 8)

Statistics		
Total Amount Owed/Paid (Per receipt/invoice)		
N	Valid	162
	Missing	0
Mean		\$1,825.1559
Median		\$939.5000
Sum		\$295,675.25

Table 8

Amount Requested by Eligible Applicants

As seen in Table 9, the mean amount requested among all eligible applicants was \$387.21, while the median amount requested was \$375.00, the maximum education reimbursement allowed. The total amount requested among eligible applicants was \$58,468.64.

Statistics		
Total amount being requested		
N	Valid	151
	Missing	11
Mean		\$387.2095
Median		\$375.0000
Sum		\$58,468.64

Table 9

Reimbursement Paid to Eligible Applicants

As seen in Table 10, education reimbursements paid to eligible applicants totaled \$56,250.00. This represents 19.02 percent of cumulative debt for the 162 eligible applicants, and 13.53 percent of cumulative debt for all 266 applicants. The mean reimbursement paid to eligible applicants was \$347.22 and the median payment was \$375.00, the maximum education reimbursement allowed.

Statistics		
Total amount being requested		
N	Valid	162
	Missing	104
Mean		\$347.2222
Median		\$375.0000
Sum		\$56,250.00

Table 10

Debt Owed to Different Institutions Among Eligible Applicants

The following table (Table 11) represents institutional debt among eligible applicants. Listed are the total number of applicants per Illinois institution of higher education, including the mean, median, and sum of debt. In addition, the sum of educational reimbursements and percent of total eligible applicant debt addressed is listed. There were 18 institutions that were represented by only one applicant.

National Louis University, City Colleges of Chicago, and St. Augustine College are the institutions where the highest number of eligible applicants incurred debt. The institutions that represented the highest amount of debt owed by eligible applicants were National Louis University (\$116,872.15) and the Chicago School of Professional Psychology (\$34,468.75). The lowest debts came from Kankakee Community College (\$395.00) and Southeastern Illinois College (\$258.00).

Institutions with the highest debt coverage were Southeastern Illinois College (100 percent), Kendall College (95.62 percent), and Kankakee Community College (94.94 percent). Those with the lowest debt coverage were Parkland College (4.76 percent), Roosevelt College (4.40 percent), and Chicago School of Professional Psychology (1.09 percent).

Institution	Total Amount Owed/Paid (Per receipt/invoice)				Reimbursement Sum	Percent of Debt Covered by Reimbursement
	Count	Mean	Median	Sum		
Total	162	\$1,825.16	\$939.50	\$295,675.25	\$56,250.00	19.02%
National Louis University	48	\$2,434.84	\$1,769.81	\$116,872.15	\$17,239.00	14.75%
City Colleges of Chicago	10	\$781.15	\$754.96	\$7,811.51	\$3,750.00	48.01%
St. Augustine College	9	\$1,879.55	\$1,301.00	\$16,915.91	\$3,375.00	19.95%
Joliet Junior College	7	\$514.66	\$322.90	\$3,602.63	\$1,975.00	54.82%
Rasmussen College	7	\$978.98	\$594.00	\$6,852.88	\$2,547.00	37.17%
Oakton Community College	6	\$1,074.81	\$725.63	\$6,448.87	\$2,101.00	32.58%
College of Lake County	5	\$467.40	\$438.00	\$2,337.00	\$1,875.00	80.23%
College of DuPage	4	\$1,748.87	\$1,060.00	\$6,995.47	\$1,500.00	21.44%
Erikson Institute	4	\$1,054.25	\$251.00	\$4,217.00	\$947.00	22.46%
Chicago State University	3	\$1,784.38	\$674.00	\$5,353.13	\$1,125.00	21.02%
Heartland Community College	3	\$360.50	\$114.00	\$1,081.50	\$538.00	49.75%
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	3	\$2,218.61	\$2,688.00	\$6,655.82	\$1,125.00	16.90%
Western Illinois University	3	\$3,461.99	\$4,493.81	\$10,385.98	\$1,125.00	10.83%
DePaul University	2	\$650.51	\$650.51	\$1,301.01	\$750.00	57.65%
Eastern Illinois University	2	\$1,923.73	\$1,923.73	\$3,847.46	\$742.00	19.29%
Governors State University	2	\$1,115.65	\$1,115.65	\$2,231.30	\$473.00	21.20%
Kankakee Community College	2	\$1,192.05	\$1,192.05	\$2,384.09	\$750.00	31.46%
Lincoln Land Community College	2	\$498.50	\$498.50	\$997.00	\$750.00	75.23%
Moraine Valley Community College	2	\$1,950.50	\$1,950.50	\$3,901.00	\$750.00	19.23%
Morton College	2	\$645.68	\$645.68	\$1,291.36	\$750.00	58.08%
Prairie State College	2	\$364.83	\$364.83	\$729.65	\$631.00	86.48%
Quincy University	2	\$2,377.50	\$2,377.50	\$4,755.00	\$630.00	13.25%
Richland Community College	2	\$1,015.00	\$1,015.00	\$2,030.00	\$750.00	36.95%
Roosevelt University	2	\$8,526.56	\$8,526.56	\$17,053.11	\$750.00	4.40%
Southeastern Illinois College	2	\$129.00	\$129.00	\$258.00	\$258.00	100.00%
Spoon River College	2	\$1,205.50	\$1,205.50	\$2,411.00	\$750.00	31.11%
Triton College	2	\$427.50	\$427.50	\$855.00	\$750.00	87.72%
University of Illinois Chicago	2	\$586.00	\$586.00	\$1,172.00	\$750.00	63.99%
Waubonsee Community College	2	\$830.00	\$830.00	\$1,660.00	\$750.00	45.18%
Black Hawk College	1	\$620.00	\$620.00	\$620.00	\$375.00	60.48%

Institution	Total Amount Owed/Paid (Per receipt/invoice)			Reimbursement Sum	Percent of Debt Covered by Reimbursement	
	Count	Mean	Median			Sum
Elgin Community College	1	\$2,116.00	\$2,116.00	\$2,116.00	\$375.00	17.72%
Illinois Central College	1	\$540.00	\$540.00	\$540.00	\$375.00	69.44%
Illinois State University	1	\$2,307.86	\$2,307.86	\$2,307.86	\$375.00	16.25%
Illinois Valley Community College	1	\$831.22	\$831.22	\$831.22	\$375.00	45.11%
Kaskaskia College	1	\$930.00	\$930.00	\$930.00	\$375.00	40.32%
Kendall College	1	\$19.87	\$19.87	\$19.87	\$19.00	95.62%
Lewis & Clark Community College	1	\$436.00	\$436.00	\$436.00	\$375.00	86.01%
Lewis University	1	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$375.00	25.00%
Lincoln College	1	\$1,390.00	\$1,390.00	\$1,390.00	\$375.00	26.98%
McHenry County College	1	\$654.23	\$654.23	\$654.23	\$375.00	57.32%
North Park University	1	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$375.00	18.75%
Northeastern Illinois University	1	\$788.82	\$788.82	\$788.82	\$375.00	47.54%
Northern Illinois University	1	\$2,670.27	\$2,670.27	\$2,670.27	\$375.00	14.04%
Parkland College	1	\$525.00	\$525.00	\$525.00	\$25.00	4.76%
Southwestern Illinois College	1	\$924.34	\$924.34	\$924.34	\$375.00	40.57%
University of Illinois Springfield	1	\$546.06	\$546.06	\$546.06	\$375.00	68.67%

Table 11

Conclusion

The Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Education Reimbursement Initiative provided a modest financial support to recipients as they pursued higher education at Illinois institutions of higher education. Data shows that with a modest \$375 reimbursement, most recipients were able to pay down less than half of their debt, while a handful of others could eliminate their total debt owed. Some recipients were able to receive funding that provided full or partial reimbursement for higher education related costs that they paid out of pocket.

While the initiative was successful in its ability to provide varying amounts of relief for recipients, recommendations for further supporting early educators and addressing their higher education barriers are needed for increased success in the future.

Recommendations

Data collected from over 160 people found eligible for an education reimbursement showed that they owed or paid \$295,675.25 to accredited Illinois institutions of higher education. The average of this debt is \$1,825.16 per person, far exceeding the education reimbursement maximum amount payable of \$375. The total program allotment of \$56,250 represents approximately 19% of the total amount of debt owed and payments made by this group.

Considering the above, recommendations regarding any future funding should include an increase to the maximum education reimbursement amount payable per person, in conjunction with availability of funding and target groups. Though elimination of debt is not reasonable, an increased reimbursement amount of up to \$750 could be more impactful to program outcomes and recipients. This increase could also allow for more forward movement in the workforce toward degree completion, attainment of official transcripts, and additional professional development advancements.

The survey data analyzed showed that nearly 80% of over 260 applicants indicated that receiving funding would assist in their efforts to re-enroll in Early Childhood/Child Development coursework. As these individuals continue to pursue higher education, it is likely that they will continue to encounter financial barriers and debt that make it difficult to reach their end goal of a degree. Allowing continued funding across program years to address new debt and current enrollment at an accredited Illinois institution of higher education will help in removing modest roadblocks that individuals may encounter as they invest in their education. Considering this, it is recommended that anyone who received funding from previous years should be allowed to apply, at a full or prorated amount, in the future.

Should program funding have long term availability, consideration should be given to the creation of a system that allows payments for current outstanding debt to be made directly to the accredited Illinois institute of higher education through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This would help to ensure that applicable balances are paid down, and any future penalties such as the inability to enroll and/or obtain official transcripts are significantly reduced.

To aid in the retention of program recipients in the Early Childhood field, it is recommended that those pursuing coursework or degree programs in or related to Early Childhood/Child Development be awarded a reimbursement. Considering this specific coursework or degree program strengthens the foundation of having a highly qualified, diverse workforce across the state. This investment would highlight the intent of addressing financial barriers while completing steps to advance educational outcomes for Illinois early educators.

